

NCW chief interacts with Internal Committee chairpersons at KU

Workplaces have to be safe for women in all respects, says VC Prof Talat

Srinagar, Feb 13: Chairperson of National Commission for Women Ms Rekha Sharma said on Saturday that the internal committees constituted in institutions and organisations to prevent sexual harassment of women must do their job efficiently and seriously to create a safe and secure workplace environment for women.

Addressing as chief guest chairpersons of Internal Committees (ICs) of University of Kashmir as well as various degree colleges during an interaction session, Ms Sharma said the ICs constituted under The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 should take their responsibilities seriously and do their job without any fear.

“There will be instances when you will face pressures in the way of your functioning, especially when the accused are holding some position of authority in institutions, but that’s where you have to rise to the occasion and do what you are supposed to do under the provision of the legislation,” she said.

Ms Sharma also cautioned against instances of filing of false cases and urged the ICs to deal with these in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Act.

“Gender sensitisation of students and faculty is important and has to be a continuous process, alongside the fact that organisations and institutions must have a robust gender policy in vogue to deal with matters of gender discrimination which don’t fall under the 2013 legislation against sexual harassment,” she said.

Vice-Chancellor of University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad, who presided over the interaction session, said a strong message must go out that women are a very important part of the society and need to be respected everywhere, including at their workplaces, to enable them to work without any fear or sense of insecurity.

He said the Internal Committees (ICs) must know their powers and function without any fear or bias to help make workplaces for women secure for them in all respects.

“Kashmir is culturally a place where we see a lot of respect for women. It is very important. Because unless and until you don’t give women equal respect, powers and space, they will continue to feel insecure,” he said.

Chairperson of KU’s Internal Committee Prof Neelofar Khan—chief organiser of Saturday’s interaction session—said it is the varsity’s continued endeavor to go for capacity-building and sensitisation of Internal Committees to boost their functioning.

“The IC chairpersons will have to work with great dedication to implement the provisions of the legislation and ensure workplaces for women are safe and secure through and through,” she said.

KU Registrar Dr Nisar Ahmad Mir said the role of ICs is crucial to ensure implementation of the Act in its letter and spirit.

He said such sensitisation programmes are important for IC chairpersons to understand their powers and functions provided in the Act. “Eventually it is the implementation of these provisions that will bring about a change all-around,” he said.

Dean School of Law Prof Mohammad Ayoub gave a detailed power-point presentation about the genesis, objectives and legal provisions of the Act, especially in line with its three main objectives, including Prohibition, Prevention and Redress.

The interaction session, among others, was attended by top varsity academics and officers including Dean College Development Council Prof G M Sangmi, Dean Behavioural Sciences

Prof Showket A Shah, Coordinator Centre for Women's Studies Prof Tabassum Firdous, and Ms Neha Mahajan, Counsellor NCW.

Dr Saima Farhad conducted proceedings of the interaction session and also presented a vote of thanks.